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Gamer Gate Returns: Collective Shout edition

August 9, 2025

Collective Shout is an registered Australian charity that campaigns against the objectification of women and the sexualisation of girls. In July Collective Shout announced that they had found about 500 games on popular games platforms like Steam and Itch.io which featured child exploitation, rape and/or incest. This is not just a case of "adult content", many of the games were so offensive to common standards of decency in Australia that they would likely be Refused Classification, making their sale a criminal offence.

Having previously referred a game to the Classification Board, and had it sale in Australia deemed illegal, with the new information of a much wider and systemic problem Collective Shout published an open letter to payment processing companies including Mastercard, Visa, PayPal and other. Payment processing companies, card networks, and banks have rules prohibiting the use of their services for certain kinds of transactions. Collective Shout argued these games fell within the prohibited categories, and called on the payment processors to cease providing services to games platforms until they stopped selling games that involved child exploitation, rape or incest.

The payment platforms responded and called on platforms to remove content that breached the payment platforms terms of service. Games platforms removed thousands of games in response. Misinformation spread claiming the removals were a result of a women's group seeking to censor all form of adult content, leading anger over censorship, and more generally at women interfering in what some men think of as "their space". Some gamers responded by launching volumetric attacks targeting Collective Shout, its staff, and its directors with a misogynistic harassment campaign.

The Online Hate Prevention Institute has in the past worked with Collective Shout on work tackling misogyny. We reached out to offer support and find out more. As result we have reviewed a lot of the abuse they have received, both the public content and through private messages, and assisted them and the social media companies in responding to the death

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threats, threats of rape, and threats of doxing to facilitate others carrying out real world violence. These are serious issued and need a strong response.

The remainder of this article provides further details and responses to questions we have put to Collective Shout.

About Collective Shout

Collective Shout is a Registered Australian Charity in good standing. They are a few years older than OHPI, having started back in 2009 and describe themselves as "a grassroots campaigns movement – a Collective Shout against the objectification of women and the sexualisation of girls in media, advertising and popular culture" which seeks to "bring about cultural change… [to] uphold the value of women and girls".

About Collective Shout's campaign

On July 14th an open letter from Collective Shout to payment platforms like Visa and Mastercard asked the recipients to "cease processing payments on gaming platforms which host rape, incest and child sexual abuse-themed games". One of the games Collective Shout used as an example was reviewed by the Australian Classification Board and then refused classification, making it illegal in Australia due to its extreme content. The letter notes how that game and others were found on the gaming platforms Steam and Itch.io. Collective Shout's research found hundreds of games on the platforms that featured rape, sexual torture and incest and noted that many of them would breach Australian classification laws. In response Steam and Itch.io have now acted to remove thousands of games.

In the letter Collective Shout said "many of these games would breach Australian classification laws". This means they are so extreme they wouldn't qualify for a "Restricted (R 18+)" or "Restricted (X 18+)" rating from the Australian Classification Board but would instead be rated "Refused Classification (RC)". R 18+ materials "contain content that may be offensive to sections of the adult community" while X 18+ materials "contain sexually explicit activity including actual sexual intercourse or other sexual activity between consenting adults." The Australian Classification Board explains, "Refused Classification (RC) refers to films, computer games and publications that cannot be sold, hired, advertised or legally imported in Australia. Material classified as RC contains content that is outside generally-accepted community standards and exceeds what can be included in the R 18+ and X 18+ ratings." The letter talks about games that involve games that involve "violent sexual torture of women, and children including incest related abuse involving family members" which is likely to be given a Refused Classification rating by the Australian Classification Board.

Q & A

OHPI: Can you give us an idea of what sort of games would fall within the Refused Classification rating?

Collective Shout: See Coralie Alison's tweet with information on how games are classified in Australia https://x.com/CoralieAlison/status/1951569967075488032

> *Australian Guidelines for the Classification of Computer Games*
>
> *The Guidelines use the following hierarchy of impact:*
> - *Very mild – G*

- *Mild – PG*
- *Moderate – M*
- *Strong – MA 15+*
- *High – R 18+*
- *Very high – RC (Computer games that exceed the R 18+ classification category will be Refused Classification and illegal to be sold in Australia.)*

The six classifiable elements in a computer game are:

- *Themes*
- *Violence*
- *Sex*
- *Language*
- *Drug use*
- *Nudity*

Computer games will be refused classification if they include or contain any of the following:

CRIME OR VIOLENCE

- *Detailed instruction or promotion in matters of crime or violence.*
- *The promotion or provision of instruction in paedophile activity.*
- *Descriptions or depictions of child sexual abuse or any other exploitative or offensive descriptions or depictions involving a person who is, or appears to be, a child under 18 years.*
- *Depictions of:*

(i) violence with a very high degree of impact which are excessively frequent, prolonged, detailed or repetitive;
(ii) cruelty or realistic violence which are very detailed and which have a very high impact;
(iii) actual sexual violence.
[(iv)] Implied sexual violence related to incentives and rewards.

SEX

- *Depictions of actual sexual activity are not permitted.*
- *Depictions of simulated sexual activity that are explicit and realistic are not permitted.*
- *Depictions of practices such as bestiality.*
- *Gratuitous, exploitative or offensive depictions of:*

(i) activity accompanied by fetishes or practices which are offensive or abhorrent;

> *(ii) incest fantasies or other fantasies which are offensive or abhorrent.*
>
> *Full legislation here*
> *https://www.legislation.gov.au/F2023L01424/asmade/text*

OHPI: Who decided which games would be removed? Did you provide a list of games that were of concern to Steam and Itch.io and they just blanket removed them all? Or have the companies reviewed the offering themselves and made the decision of what they will remove?

Collective Shout: We called on payment processors to stop processing payments on gaming platforms like Steam and itch.io that host rape, incest and child abuse themed games. While we noted we had found almost 500 games tagged with rape or incest, we did not determine what games were removed and were not privy to those discussions.

OHPI: You mentioned over email that your team had each been personally target with abuse, with some of the worst being threats of rape, death threats, doxxing, accusation of paedophilia and covering for paedophiles and deepfake porn made of you. It sounds absolutely horrific for everyone involved, and frankly like Gamergate on steroids. It sounds overwhelming. Can you describe three of the instances of cyber-abuse you have experienced in more detail?

Collective Shout: The following are from some of our team members sharing their experiences.

> *When I googled my email address, I found my name and photo on 4chan. My work email address was listed, along with a few others taken from our website and media releases, with the words "RAPE THEM" underneath. One user wrote that he planned to stab me. Another shared an image of a person hanging from a noose, alongside my name. One shared my photo – taken from my Twitter/X profile – and asked who wanted to make a c*m tribute to me (where a man ejaculates on a photo of a woman.)*

> *A man on Twitter/X began following me and making threats against the women on our team. In a tweet, he published a list of all the staff on our small women-only team alongside the text "Have fun with this list y'all. Fight until they're dead." Using the Grok AI feature, this man asked where one team member lived. He asked Grok where I like to get coffee. He also sent threats, including his desire to rape and murder the women on our team, and to "rape, hogtie and filet" us.*

> *An email that was sent to my work email address (one of many) referenced our campaign against Steam and asked me what I was going to do when they found me "irl [in real life]". Would I run and hide?*

OHPI: What was the initial reaction to this?

Collective Shout (a staff member's response): My initial reaction was a sense of dread. This isn't a fair fight – we're a handful of women being targeted in a global campaign of misogynistic abuse by hundreds of thousands of anonymous men. There's a sense of powerlessness, because it's impossible to fight back – it's barely possible to track or record

all the threats. It's frightening because you don't know if someone will follow through on a threat. It only takes one.

OHPI: How has this impacted you?

Collective Shout (a team member's response):

It is completely overwhelming. Attempting to moderate comments, block, delete, report, or report to authorities, takes so much time. It is also relentless, with no end in sight. It's really difficult to set appropriate boundaries with screentime and step away or take any time off, because the abuse doesn't stop. Every morning I wake early with a sense of dread – what new disaster has happened overnight?

There's also fear. I fear for my safety, for the safety of my children, and for all of my colleagues. I fear for our mental health. It's not easy being on the receiving end of a sustained, targeted campaign of hate. It's frustrating to see lies and misinformation being spread about our team and our work, and have no way to respond or defend ourselves.

I'm also feeling a sense of hopelessness and despair. When I went to the police, I was sent away with a cyber safety pamphlet. eSafety responds that most of our reports are not actionable. Social media platforms rarely remove anything, and if they do, it's after the damage has been done. It feels like there are no real protections for women and girls online, and I worry this abuse towards us will having a chilling effect on women speaking out more generally, because they know not only what potentially awaits them, but they are also seeing – just as our abusers are – that there are no consequences for perpetrators of abuse.

This level of abuse directed towards women who speak out against men's violence and abuse of women shows exactly why our work is necessary.

OHPI: What can people do to help?

Collective Shout: Over the course of this campaign, and others before it, we've identified key actions that can significantly impact our advocacy efforts and combat targeted abuse. Even committing to just one practical step from the actions below directly strengthens our efforts, helps protect our team, and sends a clear, united message:

Combat Misinformation

Share accurate, verified information from our website and social media accounts whenever you see false claims circulating online. Correct false narratives, focusing on facts rather than engaging in arguments with trolls.

Amplify Our Message

Sign and share Collective Shout-led petitions and campaign actions regularly shared across our social media platforms. Amplifying our campaigns publicly reaffirms our vision and mission, and directly counters misinformation spread by those attempting to distort or undermine our efforts.

Financially Support Advocacy and Protection

Consider setting up a small recurring donation to support ongoing campaigns, legal advocacy, and efforts to document and respond to online abuse. Share fundraising appeals widely within your networks to amplify Collective Shout's work even if you can't donate personally.

Report Abusive Content

Report threats, harassment, doxxing, and abusive content immediately through social media reporting tools. Select the appropriate categories, such as threats of violence, harassment, or hate speech, to improve the likelihood of action. Social media platforms

can be frustratingly inconsistent, but more reports equal increased pressure on platforms to act.

Public Solidarity

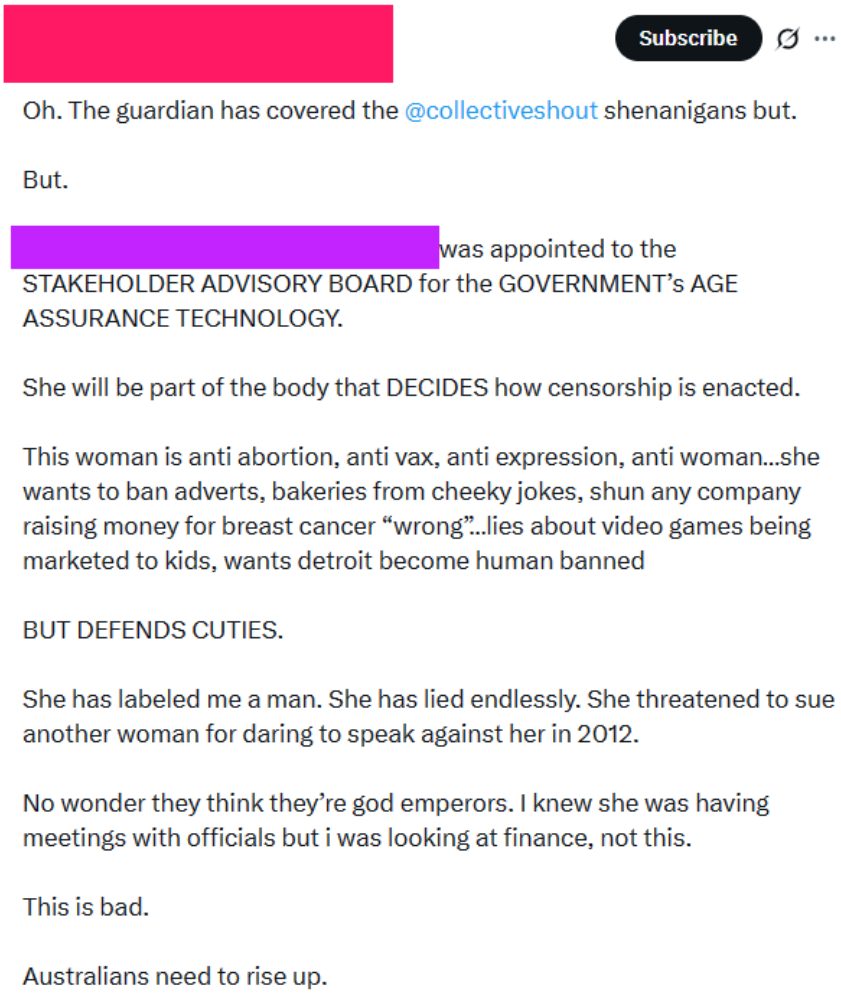
Publicly acknowledge and thank those speaking out against the objectification of women, sexualised violence, and the misogyny that fuels online abuse, tagging Collective Shout and using supportive hashtags. Privately reach out with messages of support to those of us who have been targeted, showing us we're not alone.

Additional analysis

The attention directed to Collective Shout over the game ban has spread to other discussions.

Incitement to violence on Reddit

An otherwise sensible Reddit discussion of proposed internet ID laws in Australia linked to this tweet containing disinformation about members of Collective Shout.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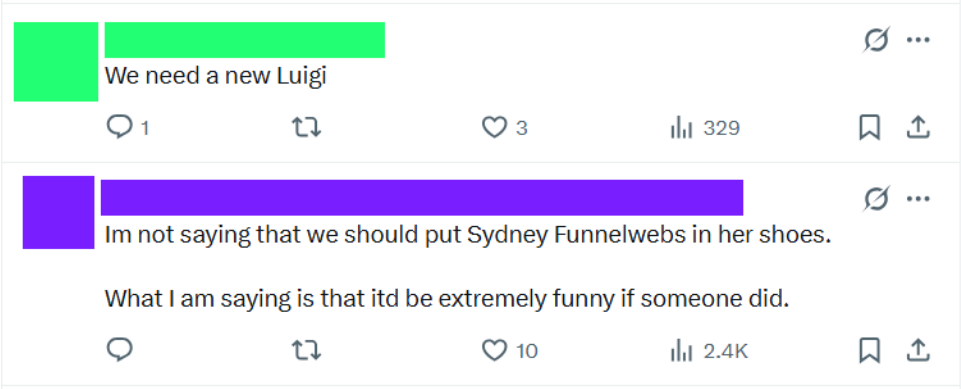
Oh. The guardian has covered the @collectiveshout shenanigans but.
But.
was appointed to the STAKEHOLDER ADVISORY BOARD for the GOVERNMENT's AGE ASSURANCE TECHNOLOGY.
She will be part of the body that DECIDES how censorship is enacted.
This woman is anti abortion, anti vax, anti expression, anti woman...she wants to ban adverts, bakeries from cheeky jokes, shun any company raising money for breast cancer "wrong"...lies about video games being marketed to kids, wants detroit become human banned
BUT DEFENDS CUTIES.
She has labeled me a man. She has lied endlessly. She threatened to sue another woman for daring to speak against her in 2012.
No wonder they think they're god emperors. I knew she was having meetings with officials but i was looking at finance, not this.
This is bad.
Australians need to rise up.

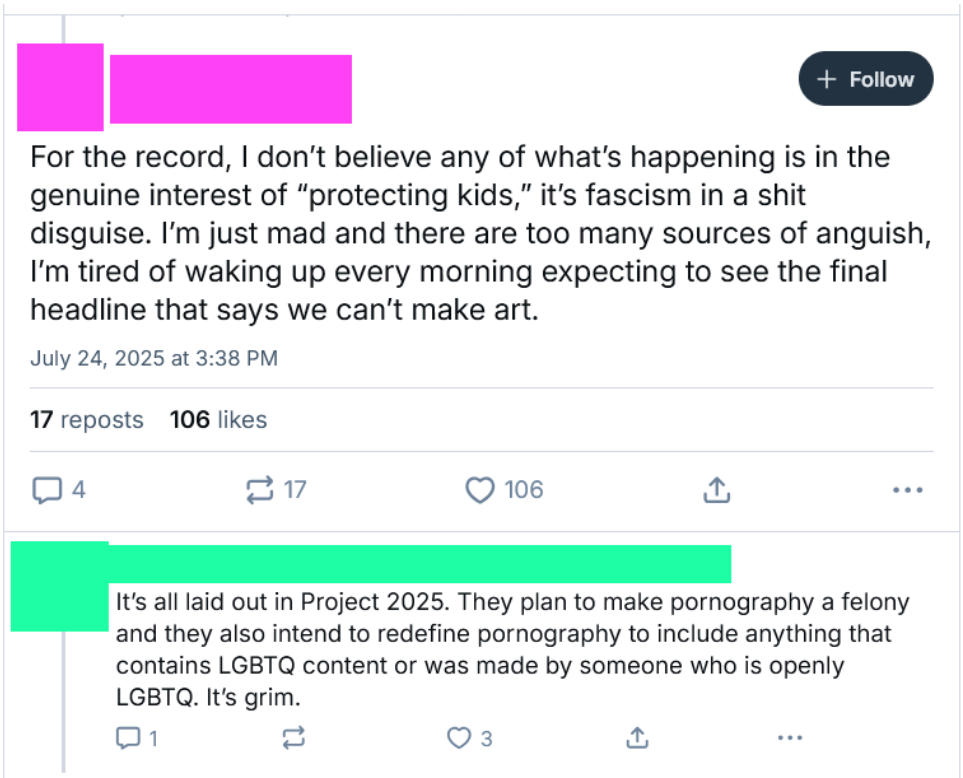
This led to multiple instances of "Luigi-posting" in the replies.


We need a new Luigi
1
3
329
Im not saying that we should put Sydney Funnelwebs in her shoes.
What I am saying is that itd be extremely funny if someone did.
10
2.4K

"Luigi-posting" uses references to Luigi Mangione, the accused killer of United Healthcare CEO Brian Thompson, as a coded call for assassination.

The LGBTQIA+ community is manipulated

The removal of games from the indie game store Itch.io in particular also aroused anger in the LGBTQIA+ community. Coming on the heels of various attempted bans on LGBTQIA+ related material in libraries and schools in the US, this was immediately categorised on Bluesky as another religious conservative attack on LGBTQIA+ media.


Follow
For the record, I don't believe any of what's happening is in the genuine interest of "protecting kids," it's fascism in a shit disguise. I'm just mad and there are too many sources of anguish, I'm tired of waking up every morning expecting to see the final headline that says we can't make art.
July 24, 2025 at 3:38 PM
17 reposts 106 likes
4
17
106
It's all laid out in Project 2025. They plan to make pornography a felony and they also intend to redefine pornography to include anything that contains LGBTQ content or was made by someone who is openly LGBTQ. It's grim.
1
3

Bluesky users don't appear to be directly contacting members of Collective Shout, however they are pushing a narrative of Collective Shout as being part of a broader fascist movement to suppress minorities.

The implicit message: that my queerness, my relationships, & the real details of my life are considered "questionable", "inappropriate", & "offensive" by the corporate liability avoidance monkeys who set the content moderation policies for generative AI systems.
Do you see the connection yet?
1
3
The recent deindexing/demonitization/removal of adult content on Steam & itch.io is the same thing, but more visible, because it directly strips the Internet of human-created art, while restricting the capacity of queer, disabled & vulnerable people to financially support each other.
1
2
This is directly analogous to the Nazis burning the Hirschfeld archives. It is analogous to policies banning "critical race studies" and "gender ideology" in schools. It (correctly) asserts that queer & trans art undermine the Fascist agenda while reducing our ability to make & consume them.
1
2

This has led to a movement to have Collective Shout de-listed as a charity by sending complaints to the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission.

Conclusion

The Online Hate Prevention Institute has been shocked by both the extreme nature and volume of the content we have seen attacking Collective Shout, the women who work there, and those that serve on its Board of Directors. The connect comes from accounts across multiple platforms. In some cases new throw away accounts have been created in an effort to anonymously post threats while trying to avoid any consequences.

These are serious cases of cyber harassment and there needs to be government responses, including international cooperation between law enforcement agencies. Threats of death and rape are not “free speech”, not even in the United States where some of the trolls clearly come from.

This is an evolving story and we will continue to provide support to Collective Shout and to monitoring the situation.

misinformation, misogyny, violent extremism

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The Online Hate Prevention Institute is a Charitable Institute and Incorporated as an Australian Public Company. ABN: 65 155 287 657

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